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Article

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Herb Wyle Annotation

An informative and well-structured article which discusses racial and moral ethics in Canadian postcolonial literature. The main focus for debate centres on racialised minorities as portrayed in two novels: George Elliott Clarke's *George & Rue* (2005) and Michael Crummey's *The Wreckage* (2005). Wyle argues that whilst late-twentieth-century poststructuralist theorists have tried to distance themselves from ethical and moral questions, there has at the same time been 'a sustained effort to reframe ethical considerations in the wake of poststructuralist scepticism' (p.821), though he warns against the use of postcolonial fiction as a 'monolithic narrative of victimization' (p.825). Both novels are set in the first half of the twentieth century, before the advent of 'official multiculturalism' (p.826), when racial discrimination in Canada was part of every day experience. *George & Rue* is a fictionalised account of the lives of two brothers hanged for killing a white taxi-driver in 1949. *The Wreckage* concerns both religious prejudice and racial violence, perpetrated by and against Japanese Canadians before and after the Second World War. In both novels, the reader can empathise with 'the racialized and marginalized other in Canadian society' (p.826), although because the protagonists are 'both victims and victimizer' (p.831), the novels develop 'an intense sense of moral ambivalence and ambiguity' (p.830). The ethical impact of these texts can prompt the reader, Wyle suggests, towards a modern day reappraisal of 'the legacy of bigotry and Eurocentricism in modern day Canada...placing the responsibility for ethical judgment squarely in the hands of readers' (p.836).